

THE SITUATION AT DIEN BIEN PHU

I. The garrison at Dien Bien Phu is still well established at all major strongpoints and the [REDACTED] in Indochina is cautiously optimistic although admitting situation continues precarious.

25X1X7 A. [REDACTED] believe they have survived "second phase" of battle relatively intact. Think "third phase" attack by Viet Minh may come within week.

II. This is the current picture of the French situation at Dien Bien Phu.

A. French have lost three out of five subpositions in Dominique and one out of four in Eliane after repeated onslaughts over past eight days.

B. Since the first attacks on 13 March French have lost about ⁸⁰⁰⁻ four battalions. Three of these have been replaced.

1. Several hundred wounded have not been evacuated and pose threat to defenders' morale.

C. Two more reserve paratroop battalions in Tonkin delta immediately available but [REDACTED] not planning to commit them yet. 25X1C

D. Heavy enemy AA fire makes drops of reinforcements and supplies difficult.

1. Planes dropping supplies forced to high altitudes and use of improvised delayed-action parachutes.

E. Spotty weather also hampers resupply. On some days many resupply and combat missions are forced to turn back.

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III. This is the current Viet Minh picture.

A. Estimated enemy casualties run as high as 20,000. Perhaps half of this figure is a reasonable minimum.

B. Viet Minh already received over 3,000 replacements.

1. These probably already been committed as De Castries attributes weakening of enemy offensive power to raw troops as well as combat fatigue.

C. Viet Minh reportedly has ordered close to 20,000 more reinforcements to Dien Bien Phu.

1. Arrival time of all these cannot be estimated. Many will be untried recruits.

25X1X7 D. [REDACTED] Viet Minh ammunition and other supplies sufficient to last into May.

1. But De Castries' intelligence chief believes enemy now parceling out its artillery ammunition.

IV. In summing up Viet Minh position, a [REDACTED] officer in Saigon said that despite its losses there is every 25X1X7 indication it continuing all-out effort to take Dien Bien Phu regardless of cost.

V. For the French the loss of Dien Bien Phu could start a trend of rapid military deterioration.

A. Loss won't be military catastrophe in terms men and materiel. Also, Viet Minh will have suffered huge casualties among its best troops.

B. But Vietnamese troops and populace will abandon hope for victory under French leadership.

1. Many Vietnamese troops will probably desert or refuse to fight.

2. People will greatly increase support of Viet Minh.

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C. Navarre, who has shown a will to win, will have lost much prestige and probably be forced to resign.

D. Viet Minh, with great enhanced prestige, will find it much easier to replace its losses.

VI. If French hold out, turning point on road to victory may well have been reached.

A. Besides favorable effect on Vietnamese, French can capitalize on heavy losses of enemy to mount offensives planned by Navarre.

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